

Editorial

Danny D. Smith, PT, DHSc, OCS, SCS, ATC: In Memoriam

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The Sports Physical Therapy community lost a great man on April 25, 2022, Dr. Danny Smith of Elizabethton, Tennessee. Danny Smith was not only a professional colleague to many of us - but was also a good friend to not only me, but many in our sports medicine community. John Stone a physician poet once wrote that: "I've seen death come on as slow as rust, or as quickly and unexpected as a doorknob coming loose in your hand". Given the untimely passing of my good friend, this quote sticks in my head as I think about the life of Dr. Danny Smith.

For those who did not know Dr. D, as he was known by so many, he was a beloved and gifted sports physical therapist who was a true asset to his community and profession as whole. Born and raised in East Tennessee, he was an outstanding baseball player for Elizabethton High School and earned a scholarship to play at Milligan College. After playing at Milligan College for three years he was accepted into Physical Therapy School at UT Memphis, graduating in 1973 with a BS in Physical Therapy. Upon graduation he moved back to east Tennessee. He continued his educational path and earned his Master's degree at East Tennessee State University in 1978. He was the founder and owner of Physical Therapy Services for 41 years and had built this private practice clinic from scratch, and now it has become one of the most well-renown private practice clinics in the Tri-Cities, Tennessee area. He has held the title of the oldest Private Practice PT Clinic Owner in the great State of Tennessee. He did not let his education pursuits stop. Believing in the advancement of physical therapy, he later earned his Doctor of Physical Therapy, becoming the first DPT in the state of TN. Finally, Dr. Danny Smith went on to pioneer a new degree offered by the University of St. Augustine, a DHSc degree.

Dr. Smith was a servant leader in his community and his profession. He has volunteered countless hours in the community as a Sports Medicine Physical Therapist provider for Elizabethton High School sports teams, and the surrounding schools in the Tri-Cities, TN area for over 45 years. He was an advocate for quality sports care for his athletes both on and off the field. Elizabethton High School was his true pride and joy, and, often, he saw the success of many championship teams for his immediate upper east Tennessee area on several occasions. He always advocated for his players, coaches, and their families both on and off the field. He was their physical therapist and athletic trainer. His patients were his priority, and he would always say "you must put your patients first and everything else will work out." His friendly smile, hearty laugh, and ability



to talk to anyone about anything made him a true friend to his community. Danny was a great storyteller and some of his stories of patient interactions were some of the finest moments in a patient's life when they gave credit and accountability to the physical therapy profession. He loved his community and giving back. He was inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame in the Tri-Cities area in recognition of his service.

I remember watching a movie with Danny one evening about the life of Steve Jobs. During the movie, Steve Jobs said: "When you grow up, you tend to get told that the world is the way it is, and you should just live your life inside that world. Try not to bash into the walls too much. Try to have a nice family life. Have fun, save a little money. That's a very limited life. Life can be much broader, once you discover one simple fact, and that is everything around that you call life was made up by people who were no smarter than you. You can change it. You can influence it. You can build your own things that other people can use. Once you learn that, you'll never be the same again". I remember Danny looking over at me and saying, "You know, I love waking up every morn-

ing going to work as a physical therapist, because I can be that someone special in someone's life."

In his leisure time, Danny enjoyed spending time with his family, fishing with his grandchildren, spending time at the lake, traveling, and helping others in need. Danny will be greatly missed both as a physical therapist, a mentor, a community leader, advocate for children in the community, a family man, and great friend.

We will remember Dr. Danny Smith as a legacy for moving the PT profession forward in many aspects and the APTA, the Sports Physical Therapy community, and APTA Tennessee are extremely thankful to him for the contributions and talents he gave to this great profession of ours. In his professional PT world, he had served in many roles and had been very active and engaged not only at a local and state level with the PT Association in Tennessee, but also nationally in the American Academy of Sports Physical Therapy – formerly the Sports Section, as it will always be to many of us. He served the TPTA as Chapter Vice President of the Tennessee Component, on the Legislative Committee, and did a tremendous job with the Awards Committee. On the national level, not only did Danny serve on various committees and the Executive Board for several years. Danny also embraced and established the challenges of providing the emergency first responder course for the section, teaching countless of our developing sports physical therapists over the years. Not only was Danny my initial EMR instructor, but he also became my mentor as an instructor trainer as he did with numerous other instructors. Dr Smith was an adjunct professor within the Belmont University School of Physical Therapy teaching emergency medical response and acute illness and injury management. Danny not only helped countless students in the classroom,

but he also mentored many students in his clinic throughout the years. He started the first Sports PT residency program in the state of TN in 2012. Though these interactions, he affected and shaped the careers of countless students. Once you met him, Dr D would become your friend for life and one you could always count on for whatever you might need. His service to the profession did not go unnoticed as he was the recipient of numerous awards at the State and National level. Within the State of Tennessee, he received the Mac Hensley Lifetime Achievement Award in September 2018 and one of the highest awards in the state, the Carol Liken Award in February 2021. Nationally, he received the Sports Physical Therapy Section Distinguished Service Award in 1999, the Sports Physical Therapy Section Ron Peyton Award in February of 2009, and the Turner A Blackburn Lifetime Achievement Award Hall of Fame induction in February of 2011. In 2021, the APTA recognized Dr Smith with the prestigious Lucy Blair Service Award for his many contributions to the profession. One of Danny's favorite lines comes from John Wayne: "Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway". Danny Smith's passion for service above self leaves a legacy for all of us to find the courage to become involved and make our profession better every day. I would like to end with a quote from Emerson: "When you were born, you were crying and everyone else was smiling. Live your life so at the end, you're the one who is smiling and everyone else is crying". Danny, we are all much better off for knowing you and I know that you are smiling about a life well lived and one that touched so many that we are all crying. Rest in Peace my friend.

Mike Voight

